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A

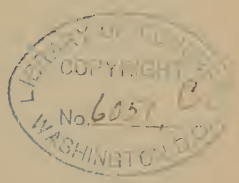
## FRATERNAL APPEAL

TO

METHODIST MINISTERS, INVITING THEM TO CONSIDER THE RELATIONS OF METHODISM TO THE NEW CHURCH.

BY E. R. KEYES,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST NEW-CHURCH SOCIETY IN PHILADELPHIA.

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# TO THE READER.

In soliciting the attention of the Methodist ministry to the relations of Methodism to the New Church, I but fulfill what seems to me a duty which I owe to my former companions in Christian labor. During the three years which have elapsed since I severed my ecclesiastical connexion with Methodism, I have experienced so sensibly the advantages which may be derived from the study of that remarkable system of Christian doctrine and spiritual philosophy, first given to the world in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, that I can do no less than commend this system to all whose candid attention I can secure. I cherish, too, a peculiar regard for the ministry and members of the Methodist Church. It was in no spirit of unkindness that I withdrew from their fellowship, but rather with deep regret that, with my new views of Christian doctrine, I could not consistently remain with them. I still hold them, therefore, in grateful remembrance; and shall ever deem myself a debtor to Methodism for unspeakable spiritual benefits, as well as for many genial and generous friends. I know of no more

suitable way of recognizing these obligations, than to direct my former associates, if I can, to that precious heritage of spiritual truth which is found in the writings of the New Church.

The present, moreover, seems a fitting time for such an effort. Methodism is entering upon a new era. Hitherto the great problems of theology have caused comparatively little agitation and division within her borders. But the spirit of free inquiry is rapidly pervading the ranks both of her ministry and laity; and her beliefs are undergoing a searching re-examination. Whatever else may result, Methodism "cannot become an apostle of the dead past." If, as Neander says, "we stand on the line between the old world and a new, about to be called into being by the ever fresh energy of the Gospel," Methodism will be false to her traditions as a progressive power, and lose her grandest opportunity, if she does not identify herself with the "new world" of religious thought which is emerging into existence.

E. R. K.

1333 Girard Avenue,
Philadelphia, April 20, 1872.

# Wesley and Swedenborg.

ABOUT the middle of the last century the condition of the Christian world had become such as to excite alarm in the minds of all intelligent and serious observers. For a hundred years previous, the school of English Deists had been waging effectual warfare against the organized Christianity of the day. Lord Herbert of Cherbury had written upon the universal religion, or the religion of nature, and argued its sufficiency without the Christian revelation. Thomas Hobbes had sought to resolve religion into a mere conventional institution, a vested interest of the state. The Earl of Shaftesbury, though more moderate in his tone, and respectful toward religion, yet declared his dissent from the dogmatic Christianity of the times, and was ranked by churchmen as an enemy of the true faith. Collins asserted in an able treatise the right of free thinking. Woolston allegorized the miracles of the New Testament, and aimed to undermine the foundations of Christianity. Tindall, Chubb, Hume and Lord Bolingbroke carried on the relentless assault against the shattered and trembling fabric of the traditional theology, and congratulated themselves that the victory was almost won. On the continent, Voltaire and the French infidels generally waxed bold and insolent toward an effete and impotent church; and in Germany Semler and Bardht were laying the foundations of the modern system of Rationalism.

In the midst of this hostile activity, the Church, though not wholly idle, was well-nigh powerless. A few trained and earnest minds maintained her cause, but made no decisive impression on the public mind. Even their own testimony is conclusive on this point. Watts declared that there was "a general decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men." Archbishop Secker says: "Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all." Bishop Burnett laments, "with deepest concern," the "imminent ruin hanging over the Church;" and Bishop Warburton testifies that "the divine lyre is almost silenced." Thus the enemies and the friends of Christianity alike bear witness to the deplorable state into which it had fallen, and the prospect of its speedy extinction unless Providence should interpose in its behalf.

At this crisis two remarkable men made their appearance in Europe; one in England, the other on the continent. Their names were John Wesley and Emanuel Swedenborg. Both were sons of eminent clergymen, and very respectably connected. Both were reared in the bosom of the State Church in their respective countries, and were thoroughly educated. Both were religiously disposed in early life. Both were accomplished and model gentlemen of the old regime. Both were men of great mental power and physical endurance, and enjoyed almost perfect health until extreme old age. Their labors, though diverse, were intimately related and complementary. Swedenborg was born in 1688, and died in 1772. Wesley was born in 1703, and died in 1791. They were, therefore, contemporaries in active labor for about half a century. Both alike appeared for the rescue and maintenance of the Christian religion. Both were ready and voluminous writers, and were well versed in the

literature of ancient as well as modern times. But there were also marked differences between them. In genius and temper they were quite unlike. Wesley was severe and ascetic in his spirit; Swedenborg was free and generous. Wesley was narrow and intense in his views and feelings; Swedenborg was broad and discursive in his mental activity. Wesley was a man of one work, and that work he did thoroughly and well; Swedenborg was a man of varied studies and occupations, and a master in them all. Wesley devoted his whole life to the work of converting and caring for the souls of men; Swedenborg gave the first half of his active life to public duties in the service of the government of Sweden, and to scientific, philosophical, and literary studies, and the latter half to biblical and spiritual investigations. In Wesley's mind "there was nothing of the philosophic quality," but instead of it a thorough earnestness of purpose and an intuitive perception of right practical measures, which fitted him to "lead and command" men; Swedenborg was philosophical, ruminative, and deeply spiritual, but not adapted to the mastery of men, nor capable of entering into the excitement and rivalry of political life. Wesley was highly susceptible to spiritual influences, but lacked the power to comprehend rightly the strange phenomena, the wonderful psychical manifestations, that came under his notice; Swedenborg was still more open to spiritual influences, and had the self-poise and deep philosophical and spiritual insight that enabled him to understand spiritual phenomena and ascertain their laws. Wesley's sphere of labor was chiefly among the ignorant and poor, over whom he exercised a beneficent and almost absolute control; while Swedenborg's associations were among the influential classes. Wesley was an evangelist of the Church of England; and

Swedenborg professed to be the Lord's servant for the work of revealing the spiritual sense of the Word, and the grand realities of the spiritual world. Wesley preached and wrote for his own times; hence his writings are rapidly passing out of public notice, and ceasing to be relished even by those who bear his name: Swedenborg was very imperfectly known and appreciated by his contemporaries, and wrote, not for them, but for the Church in all future ages; hence his writings are but slowly coming to the notice of the public, and are read only by the prepared and thoughtful few. They will yet command the attention they deserve.

But these remarkable men, though contemporaries and spending much of their time in London, never met in this world. Wesley was partially acquainted with Swedenborg's peculiar views, and wrote a lengthy review of his system. He utterly failed, however, to grasp the system in its completeness and symmetry, and hence misconceived and perverted its several parts. What the result might have been had these two men met and become acquainted with each other, it is impossible to know, and useless to surmise. We have proof, however, that they mutually desired a meeting. Toward the end of February, 1772, both being then in London, Swedenborg addressed a note to Wesley, stating that he had been informed in the spiritual world that he (Wesley) had "a strong desire to converse with him;" and added that he should be happy to see him, if he would favor him with a visit. Wesley frankly admitted to those who were with him at the time, that he had been strongly impressed with a desire to see and converse with Swedenborg, but had not mentioned the desire to any one. He wrote in reply that he was about to start on a six months' journey, but would wait upon Swedenborg on his return. The latter answered, that

the proposed visit would be too late, as he should depart to the spiritual world on the 29th day of the next month, never to return. He died on the day designated; and the interview never took place on earth. It was wisely ordered, doubtless, that they should not meet. Each had his appropriate work to do; and it was well that each was left to fulfill his providential mission, uninfluenced by the other. Wesley's work, like Swedenborg's, was of momentous importance; and the exigencies of the Church and the world required that it should be performed as preliminary to that deeper and wider movement which Swedenborg came to announce.

The mission of Wesley was to revive the dying embers of spiritual life in the Christian world. His genius and studies did not fit him for reconstructing its theology. He did not attempt this. He accepted the theology of the Anglican Church in its essential features; and putting it into its simplest form, sought to impregnate it with divine life, and bring it to bear on a corrupt and skeptical age. He preached with authority and power as a messenger sent of God. He aimed to awaken men to repentance and newness of life. It was not in his thought to propound a new scheme of divinity, or to build up a new ecclesiastical organization. His societies were simple associations within the fold of the Established Church, designed to supplement its work. The control of these societies naturally fell into Mr. Wesley's hands; and he accepted this responsibility as a trust committed to him by the Lord. He did not seek power for its own sake, or for any selfish ends.

Dismissing Mr. Wesley, let us now take a survey of the great religious movement which, in connection with Whitfield, he was instrumental in inaugurating.

1. One of its most distinctive elements was the spiritual power which it infused into the old, familiar doctrines of religion. No new dogma was proclaimed; but the accepted Protestant faith, unchanged in verbal statement, seemed all at once to become big with a new and glorious meaning. Doctrines long dead and powerless, falling now from the lips of earnest men, smote upon the hearts of the hearers with resistless force, as if launched by the hand of the Almighty. The preacher might be learned, or he might be illiterate; it mattered not which; it was not so much the man, as his message, that was regarded; not so much the audible voice, as the internal, silent power of the divine Spirit that clinched conviction upon the soul. Men were brought face to face with God, and all mere moral and prudential motives were swallowed up in the all-absorbing thought that God's eye was upon them, and that they must commend themselves to Him. They had always heard and believed that God was love; that He was angry with the wicked; that Christ suffered and died to reconcile his Father to us; that sinners might be forgiven through faith in his blood; that being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and that the wrath of God will abide forever on all who refuse to obey the Gospel. And yet none seemed to have any conception of the proper force of these declarations. These were common-place doctrines which passed with the mass of nominal Christians unquestioned, and at the same time unheeded. It was given to the preachers of Methodism to discern in these statements something more than theological dogmas. For them they contained living truths, matters of inward personal experience, and were the very voice of God. Hence it seemed as if a new Gospel had suddenly burst upon the world. Christ was preached with

awful authority and power, as a present, loving and almighty Saviour. He was held up to the gaze of sinners as a being full of the tenderest human sympathies, and yet as comprehending in himself all the fullness of the eternal Divinity. The results that often attended this kind of preaching were indescribable. They must be experienced in order to be understood. The essential glories of the day of Pentecost were frequently repeated, perhaps surpassed.

Among the peculiar experiences which gave to Methodism this wonderful spiritual power, we may instance the sense of sin, the assurance of pardon, peace of mind, a spirit of entire consecration, and the consciousness of union with God in Christ. These experiences often assumed great distinctness and vividness. Sin was felt to be an infringement of the personal majesty of Jehovah, and deserving of his sternest visitations. The sense of guilt was overpowering. Souls writhed under it in agony, as if already tossing on the lake of fire. They felt themselves to be in the hands of an angry God, and that resistance to his will was utterly hopeless. They caught with passionate eagerness, therefore, at the idea of salvation through an almighty and loving Saviour, who had satisfied the justice of God by his own sufferings and death. Him they could trust; and trusting in him, they felt that they were safe. Yielding themselves up to him in a solemn covenant of repentance and obedience, they felt that the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, and that the dark burden of their guilt was all taken away. The moment of this experience was one of unutterable joy, as when one is released from sentence of death. Humble, loving gratitude possessed the soul; and peace, calm, deep, and measureless, succeeded to agonizing fear and repentance. The duty of an entire consecration of their service to the Lord, was then

cordially recognized, and undertaken in reliance upon divine help. They felt, too, that a new and infinite source of strength was opened up within them. They were in conscious union with God. Divine power seemed to pervade their souls. They were "strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inward man."

The preachers of Methodism, possessed of these elements of spiritual power, gave to the words of Jesus and the dogmas of theology a significance and efficacy unprecedented since the days of the apostles. All classes of society, but mainly the middle and lower classes at first, hung upon their lips with wrapt attention, and were swayed by them as a forest before the wind. Serious theological errors were often inculcated; but the practical effect of these was generally neutralized by the sincere and earnest spirit of both preachers and people, and the many vital truths which they received and obeyed. Especially were they mighty in the Scriptures, often wielding particular texts and historical facts with great skill and resistless power.

2. Another distinctive element in Methodism was the importance it attached to a good life. Its doctrine of salvation by faith only, might in logical strictness have been made an apology for neglecting the divine precepts; but practically the doctrine was not and could not be so interpreted by any sincere Methodist. Obedience to the truth of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures was insisted upon quite as strongly as faith itself; and faith was declared to be dead and worthless unless expressed and evidenced in good works. Men were exhorted to repent and do works meet for repentance. They were also exhorted to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and were charged, on peril of nullifying their faith and incurring eternal damnation, to keep his command-

ments. Hence they were accused by their Calvinistic opponents of teaching salvation by the merit of works. This accusation was met by the retort, that Calvinism teaches salvation by faith only, and thus abrogates the divine law as a rule of conduct. In truth, neither party was actually guilty of the charge made by its adversary. Both alike were careful to obey the divine precepts; and both alike rejected the idea of merit in such obedience. Both acknowledged that, in men, all good and all power to do good is of and from God; and that merit is impossible to any creature. The preachers of Methodism were especially earnest in enforcing repentance, restitution, and external as well as internal holiness of life. This was often carried to the verge of asceticism; but sinners were never left in doubt as to the absolute importance of renouncing every evil way—in desire and thought as well as in outward act—if they would be saved. This inexorable requirement was a word of power. Its perfect justice was obvious to all. It carried with it also the implication of a promise that both the love and justice of God would guarantee the well-being of all who submitted to its claims.

Closely allied to this element of Methodism, if not substantially identical with it, was its conception of religion as consisting not in outward rites and ecclesiastical arrangements, but in love to God and man. Wesley says: "Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England. This old religion is no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind. . . . Those who hold it are not bigoted to opinions; they would hold right opinions; but they are peculiarly cautious not to rest the weight of Christianity there." This noble, Christian utter-

ance finds a fitting response in the words of Swedenborg: "If the members of the Church had made love to the Lord and charity toward their neighbor the principal point of faith, doctrinals would then be merely varieties of opinion concerning the mysteries of faith, which they who are true Christians would leave to every one to receive according to his conscience; while the language of their hearts would be, *He is a true Christian who lives as a Christian*, that is, as the Lord teaches." (*Arcana Cœlestia*, 1799.) It is due to Methodism to say, that sentiments such as these have generally met with a cordial response both from her ministers and people. Bishop Janes says: "It is one of the advantages and beauties of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that there is nothing in her religious faith or education or polity that embarrasses our fellowship with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We can commune with them, work with them, and rejoice with them, just as far as their catholicity will admit." (*Methodist Quarterly Review*, July, 1869.)

I will not now press the inquiry, "How far has Methodism remained true to these lofty principles?" or, "Is she now ready to fellowship 'all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity?'" I wish only to call attention to the fact that, according to the testimony of some of her highest authorities, as well as according to the teachings of one whom they have been accustomed to regard as far removed from the true faith, religion, the religion of Christ, the religion that saves men, consists in love to God, evidenced by love to man and a life of genuine, practical piety. Where these elements exist, one is acknowledged to be in a state of salvation, be his speculative opinions on theological subjects what they may.

3. The third distinctive element in Methodism was its spirit of Christian philanthropy. It was a message of "good will to men." Sinners of every grade, every condition in life, every nationality, were the subjects of its earnest concern. The true Methodist, whether minister or layman, believed in the priceless value of every human soul; and felt that no effort was too costly which might be required to save a soul from the horrors of the "second death." But there was a further and perhaps stronger motive which prompted him to labor for the salvation of his fellow-men. He looked upon them as the purchase of the Redeemer's blood. They were regarded as infinitely dear to Him who endured unutterable agonies, and yielded up his life to rescue them from hell. In proportion, therefore, as one was inspired with love to Christ, would he desire and seek the salvation of those for whom Christ had died. Every sinner converted was a trophy to be laid at the feet of Jesus, a star to be set in his diadem; and no service was believed to be so acceptable to him as this. Love to Christ and love to men, became thus to every earnest Methodist an imperative warrant for efforts to save souls from death. He was on fire with consuming zeal; he was ready to encounter perils of the way, perils from the elements, perils from pestilence, perils from hunger and thirst, perils from raging mobs, and perils from hostile civil and ecclesiastical powers, in the fulfillment of his high commission. Indeed, he delighted to plant the standard of the Gospel in advanced and exposed positions. He was most at home on the skirmish line, or on the red front of battle, face to face with the full strength of the enemy. Methodism was thus made emphatically a missionary movement. Like her Lord, she "came, not to call the righteous, but

sinners to repentance." She was ever pushing into the regions beyond, where christianizing agencies had never before penetrated; and her itinerants were generally the first ministers of the Gospel that made their appearance in the frontier settlements on this continent. But nominal christendom was too limited a field for her enterprise. Her eager gaze was early fixed on the heathen world. She coveted these vast possessions for her divine Master; and so soon as her resources of men and money would warrant the undertaking, her missionaries were sent abroad into foreign fields to tell the story of the Incarnation and the Cross. Indeed, all existing religious bodies in Europe and in this country caught inspiration from her enthusiasm, and engaged heartily in practical Christian effort. Bible, Tract, Sunday-school and Missionary societies sprang into existence, as if the creative effluence from God were going forth among men. It was an era of great moral and social changes of the most beneficent character; and the student of history who desires to arrive at a true understanding of the remarkable events which characterized the last half of the 18th century must make himself familiar with the rise and progress of Methodism.

I am aware that the statement here given of the elements of spiritual power in Methodism, is meagre and imperfect; but it is all that my present limits will allow. Enough has been said, however, to show that the Methodist movement was one of no ordinary character. It evidently marks a new era in the religious history of the world. It was not a mere continuation of the Reformation: it was a new Reformation, sustaining, doubtless, an intimate relation to that inaugurated by Luther, but differing from it most essentially. Without Luther's work, Wesley's would have been impossible; and

without Wesley's work, Luther's was incomplete, and must have come to naught. Luther broke the spiritual despotism of Rome, and exemplified the right of free thought and private judgment. He restored the Bible to the people, and taught men how to find access to God without the offices of the church or priest. His work was mainly theological and ecclesiastical. The conflict in which he engaged, and in which he was so successful, was a war of opinions and principles relating to the externals of the church. Wesley, on the other hand, concerned himself very little with questions of this nature. Holding them to be of secondary importance, he sought to restore the vital spirit of Christianity. It was not enough for him that the church was sound in doctrine, apostolic in its order, and comely in outward form, while she was yet powerless, cold and dead. He desired to see her filled with the life and warmth of divine love, active with holy energy, and beaming with celestial grace. This was the Reformation which he labored to accomplish, and lived to see advancing with great power.

But the relations of Methodism are not wholly with the Reformation, or any past order of events. In the words of Isaac Taylor:

"Every event, or course of events, that may deserve to be spoken of as an epoch in religious history, must stand related to the future as well as to the past. Methodism, the coherent dependence of which upon the Reformation may be traced, will, no doubt, be seen also to reappear among those greater religious movements which are destined next to agitate the social system. An attempt to predict distinctly those future movements ought to be reprehended as presumptuous. Nevertheless, it may be warrantable to pursue an analogy thus far; that is to say, while considering the relations of

Methodism to the Reformation, to consider also, what it is to which Methodism may have been the proper preliminary, or to what order of events, yet future, it may seem to point." —*Wesley and Methodism*, p. 22.

Methodism is not a finality. It is a great power for good; but none will claim for it perfection, either as a life, a doctrine or an organization. Its achievements in multiplying converts, instituting evangelizing and educational agencies, building church edifices, and providing all the externals of religion, have been marvelous beyond all precedent in ancient or modern times; but it has ever been ready to acknowledge its defects, and to change its instrumentalities when new exigencies have arisen. Its spirit is essentially progressive; and we detract nothing from its true glory when we speak of it as a preparative and prophecy of better things to come. The Methodism of the present must pass away; but its dissolution will be the birth-struggle of a new and higher Methodism. From within the vanishing forms of the old economy there will burst forth a fuller manifestation of divine light and life. Christianity has never yet displayed its full power. Its divine beauty has been marred by the errors and imperfections of men. It has gained in Methodism its highest known development as a spiritual power; but all admit that it has not yet reached the millennial day which the Word of God foretells. Shall it be deemed improbable, however, that Methodism is the immediate precursor of that day? May it not be the first phase of that final and crowning dispensation of divine truth, on which the hope of the Church has been so long and so earnestly fixed?

In suggesting now the intimate relationship of Methodism to the New Church foretold in the Apocalypse, I am aware

that I bring into association names and systems which have generally been regarded as sustaining to each other no possible relation except that of utter antagonism. I encounter at once the honest prejudices of good men, who look upon the professed adherents of the New Church as enemies of evangelical religion. I know how difficult is my task in attempting even to get the ear of those to whom these words are addressed. I am impressed with the conviction, nevertheless, that some tentative efforts ought to be made toward securing a better understanding between the adherents of the New Church and the supporters of the prevalent organized Christianity. It is evident that the efforts of good men on both sides are, at present, mutually hindered by mutual misapprehension. Some zealous New Churchmen have excited against themselves and their cause a determined hostility, by identifying the New Church with a certain new ecclesiastical organization, thus denying to all other religious bodies any claim to a living and valid Christianity; while the defenders of the so-called evangelical faith have, in turn, refused to New Churchmen both ecclesiastical and Christian fellowship. But there can be no excuse for the further perpetuation of these mutual mistakes and recriminations. Bigotry and uncharitableness stand rebuked by the genius of Christianity and the spirit of the new Age; and it will not be for lack of opportunities to know each other better, if the parties to the issue in question continue in a state of antagonism.

I come now to the consideration of that religious Movement to which Methodism may be regarded as "the proper preliminary."

I have already intimated that this Movement, greater and

wider than Methodism itself, is the establishment of a New Church among men. Methodism may be viewed, moreover, either as preliminary to this movement, or as the first phase of the movement itself. Viewed historically, or in its ecclesiastical developements, it should be held as preliminary to what is known as the external New Church; while, viewed in its origin and most vital elements, it is but the first phase of New Church life in the world, and therefore an essential part of the New Church itself.

### WHAT IS THE NEW CHURCH?

In endeavoring to unfold what is meant by the New Church, it will be necessary to do it in such a way as to exhibit its proper relations to Methodism. I must give, therefore, something more than a mere definition of it. I must speak of its origin and the process of its formation, as well as of its outward historical developments. I shall assume, too, the truth of what Swedenborg has told us concerning the economy of the spiritual world, at the same time only asking of those who discredit his claims, that they will accept his statements as provisional hypotheses merely, whose value is to be tested, like the theories of science, by the manner in which they enable us to explain and harmonize the facts with which we have to deal.

There have been several churches or dispensations during the history of our race, each of which has been distinguished from the others by something peculiar in its genius and its degree of spiritual life. The men of the Adamic or Most Ancient Church were in a state of true order, and offered no resistance, therefore, to the divine influx of love and wisdom. They had a clear perception of the good and the true. Love to God was the ruling

principle of their life; and, like the instinct of the animal creation, led them with unerring certainty to the knowledge of divine truth. They were in childlike innocence and simplicity, and were willing to be led by the Lord. But in process of time, they began to decline from this celestial state. They asserted their own self-hood, and fell to reasoning about matters of opinion and faith. Instead of receiving truth from the Lord by open revelation, they sought to discover and establish it by their own understanding. The result was a "flood" of evils and falsities, which swept away the Most Ancient Church. This was succeeded by the Noetic or Ancient Church, to which an external or written revelation was given, by means of which men might be taught what was true, and so be led to a life of charity. The men of this church, though principled in a lower degree of spiritual life than the men of the Most Ancient Church, were yet in the exercise of spiritual perception to such an extent that they were able to discern clearly the correspondence between things natural and things spiritual, and also to understand the Revelation which was given them in symbolical or correspondential language. But the decline went on. The "fall" was not yet complete. The men of the Ancient Church, from being spiritual, became natural. They ceased at last to discern spiritual truth and to be led by it; and became immersed in the lusts and errors of the natural mind. The Revelation which God had given, became unintelligible to them; and was superseded by the Hebrew Scriptures.

Thus the Noetic, or spiritual church passed away, and the Jewish Church was established. This was a purely external Church, or, more properly, the representative of a church, there being in it nothing of genuine spiritual life.

Its rites and ceremonials when properly observed, however, served as forms into which a measure of divine influence could flow, and preserve men in a kind of external morality and sanctity. But even these forms came at length to be neglected or desecrated. The Sacred Scriptures as well as the rites and ceremonies of religion, were practically violated and trampled under foot by the Jewish people. Humanity sounded the lowest depths of its degradation, and must have perished but for the advent of the Lord. By his incarnation, glorification and work of redemption, He checked the downward tendencies of the race, provided for its return to the heights from which it had fallen, and instituted a new church on earth as a means to this end. This church was based upon the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and upon a life of obedience to his commandments. But no scheme of doctrine, rationally unfolded, was propounded to the first adherents of the Christian church. They were not prepared to receive it. To them Christianity was more a system of facts, than of doctrines; more an outward form concealing mysteries, than a scheme of rational truth. But efforts were soon made to evolve a system of doctrine from the facts of Christianity. The result was what might have been expected. A pestilent brood of mutually hostile sects and creeds sprung into existence; spiritual life was destroyed; and about the middle of the last century, according to the testimony of the writers of that period, Christianity was on the verge of utter extinction.

The New Church, described in the Apocalypse, and now descending out of heaven from God, was then inaugurated. This involved, as indeed did the institution of the Noetic and Christian Churches, a general judgment in the spiritual

world. During the Christian dispensation, which came to a close about the middle of the 18th century, those who lived in well-defined states of good or evil, passed, at death, into the world of spirits, and thence, after suitable preparation, into heaven or hell—the good, into the Christian heaven, and the evil into the corresponding hell. But there were many who were in a mixed spiritual condition, some being inwardly evil, but outwardly religious; and others inwardly good, but immersed in ignorance, or in false beliefs. These classes formed themselves into imaginary heavens in the world of spirits, and accumulated there in immense numbers, so that the influx of divine love and wisdom, in its descent through these heavens into the minds of men on earth, was perverted and changed into evils and falsities. Those who were inwardly good, but grossly ignorant or mistaken, remained in their imaginary heaven till they were properly purified from their ignorance and errors, and were then received among the angels. But those who, while on earth, had been inwardly evil, though outwardly moral and religious, remained in this imaginary heaven from age to age, and became more and more confirmed in their evil states. They were organized into vast civil and ecclesiastical communities, similar to those in which they had lived while on earth, and by their perpetual influx into the minds of men, helped to perpetuate all the errors and evils which existed in nations and churches in this world. They were inspired from the hells with which they were in close alliance; and were encroaching more and more on the ultimate, or lowest sphere of the Christian heaven. This state of things could not long continue. The order and peace of the heavens, as well as the safety of the Church, demanded that this vast and powerful combination of spirits should be broken up.

A judgment was therefore executed upon them, not forensically, or after the forms of earthly tribunals, but by a clearer manifestation of divine truth among the angels, and, through them, among the imaginary heavens. The latter being unwilling and unable to receive the truth, or to bear the flood of light which was poured upon them, were speedily dissolved, just as associations of wicked men here are broken up by the truth which a free press flashes upon them from day to day. This illusory heaven thus "departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Its inhabitants, stripped of all disguises, and revealed in their inherent vileness and deformity, sought refuge from the blaze of divine truth amid the darkness of hell. The Christian heaven being freed from their infestations, was elevated into a clearer perception of divine truth. It was constituted a "new heaven," and fitted to become the medium through which divine influences might flow down into the minds of men, and inaugurate a new state of religion in the world.

This latest general judgment, resulting in the formation of a "new heaven and a new earth," or in the illumination of the Christian heaven by clearer displays of divine truth, and the institution of a New Church on earth, is also the *last* general judgment. Owing to the fullness and rapid diffusion of rational and spiritual light among men on earth and in the world of spirits as well as in the heavens, both men and spirits are more easily judged and classified than formerly; so that now none remain in the intermediate world more than twenty or thirty years, and few so long as this, before they pass on to their final abode in heaven or hell. It is impossible, therefore, for the spirits of men to accumulate in large numbers in that world, or to form powerful

combinations for evil purposes. Hence it is that evil combinations and corrupt institutions in this world, having no firm spiritual basis to rest upon, no enduring alliance with kindred spiritual organizations in the world of spirits, have, during the last hundred years, been growing less and less stable, and been dissolved with far greater ease and rapidity than in previous centuries.

According to the testimony of Swedenborg, who claims to have witnessed through open spiritual vision the processes of the last general judgment, this event occurred in 1757. But every such event is preceded by a work of visitation and exploration. It is no arbitrary, forced and violent procedure. It is brought about in accordance with the laws of man's spiritual being. We must presume, therefore, that the preliminary processes of this event began some years previous to the grand consummation. While the imaginary heavens were yet exulting in their fancied strength, and threatening more and more boldly the peace of the angels, reactionary movements were initiated by the Lord among the latter, and preparations were made for the overthrow of their enemies. These activities in heaven, at first comparatively feeble, and ultimated in efforts isolated and but partially successful among men, gradually increased in energy and scope, till the angelic hosts were all astir as if for some mighty enterprise, and strange tremblings and premonitions began to run through the whole imaginary heaven*. In other words the simple faith of the apostolic

* In support of the view here advanced concerning an "imaginary heaven," I beg leave to call the attention of the reader to the following: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Luke x. 18. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and pre-

church, the faith in which the martyrs died, the faith on which the Christian heaven was founded, namely, the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of men, and the necessity of obedience to his teachings in order to salvation, was proclaimed with great clearness and authority throughout the world of spirits. Those who were not in a state to receive these truths, fled to their infernal abodes; while those who were prepared to welcome this Gospel, were received among the angels.

The result of this dispersion of the imaginary heavens,

vailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." Rev. xii. 7, 8. Mr. Wesley seems to regard the "heaven" mentioned in this latter passage, as the proper angelic heaven; and speaking of the "dragon," he remarks that "his ordinary abode was in heaven." If heaven were a material world, possibly the "dragon" might occasionally be found there—I know not; but that heaven should be the "ordinary abode" of "that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan," seems very questionable. Besides, the Scriptures inform us that a place of very different character is "prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. xxv. 41. Heaven is a spiritual world, where only those can dwell who are in holy states of life; hence the "dragon," constituted of spirits who were evil and in false beliefs, though externally moral and religious, could not have been in the true angelic heaven. He was in an "imaginary heaven," organized by himself in the world of spirits. In the process of judgment he was first cast down from this "heaven" into the "earth," i. e., into the lower parts of that world. Subsequently an angel came down from heaven (not from the "heaven" of the "dragon," surely), and cast him into the "bottomless pit," or hell. The passage from Luke describes a similar scene which took place during the judgment which the Lord executed in the world of spirits while he was on earth. Satan never gains a lodgment in heaven—the home of the angels; and within its confines "war" is unknown.

has been the gradual clarification of the spiritual atmosphere of this world, and the progressive emancipation of human thought from the trammels of custom and authority, not only in the concerns of religion, but also in matters of government, philosophy, literature and science. The superincumbent mass of false and evil spirits which had for ages rested on the mind of the world, being removed, the thought of the race, obedient to immanent divine impulses, rebounded from its state of stupor and feebleness into an amazing vigor of life. Men began at once to inquire into the significance and value of hoary customs and incomprehensible dogmas, and to demand a reason for the faith to which their assent was required. This was a step in advance of Luther's work. He proclaimed freedom of thought; but failed to see that its inevitable correlative is the rationality of faith. The new dispensation now in progress demands the recognition of both these principles. Methodism, as the first phase of the new Reformation, has recognized only the former; but the progress of the movement is securing the adoption of the latter as well.

But the New Church cannot rest on mere regulative principles of thought, important as these may be. It must be founded on definite rational truths, drawn from the Word of God, and invested with divine authority. These, and not inexplicable mysteries, must constitute it a living, comely, efficient organism; for it is only into divine truths received rationally by the mind, that the New Heavens can descend. It is only by means of these forms that God and the angels can enter into spiritual and living conjunction with men. Our next step must be, therefore, to unfold that system of doctrinal truth on which the New Church, in its distinctive character, is founded.

The first Christian Church, so far as it was a genuine Church, rested, as already observed, on the acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and a life according to his commandments. The acknowledgment of Jesus as the Son of God involved the doctrine of his supreme and absolute divinity; and genuine obedience to his commandments could only spring from true love to Him, and implicit trust in Him as a Saviour. But it was not given to the Christian Church to enter rationally into the scheme of doctrine which lay infolded in the historical facts of Christianity. The Gospel preached by the apostles was one of narrative rather than of dogma; and of external, rather than internal truth. It appealed chiefly, therefore, to the lower degrees of the mind, to natural thought and sentiment, rather than to rational thought and spiritual perception. The spiritual nature was, it is true, often quickened in a wonderful manner; and after the close of the apostolic age, endless efforts were made to construct a rational system of doctrine; but the higher and purer forms of Christian experience, depending as they do upon rational perceptions of spiritual truth, could not be reached; and the doctrinal systems invented were mutually antagonistic, and, in the light of to-day, grossly absurd. Jesus was rightly received as supremely divine; but he was erroneously set forth as a person distinct from the Father. He was properly regarded as the Redeemer of men; but the process of redemption, and the ethical principles involved in it, were utterly misconceived in the theological systems which, at an early day, supplanted the simple teachings of the apostles. In the New Church, on the other hand, the Gospel proclaimed, while recognizing and harmonizing the historical facts of Christianity, presents a system of doctrine

fairly deduced from these facts, and satisfying all the demands of enlightened reason.

1. First in importance among the elements of any religion is the doctrine concerning God. This, more than any other, determines the character of the religion. The New Church, therefore, solicits the attention of the world to this point in her faith.

God is one in essence and in person. The uniform language of inspiration is, "The Lord our God is one Lord." There is in Him a trinity of essentials, called love, wisdom and their divine proceeding, or operative energy. These essentials are distinct, but inseparable, and in their necessary and eternal union constitute the Divine Personality. Could they be separated from each other, neither, by itself, would constitute a person. To disjoin them would be to destroy the personality of God. Love is the inmost principle of the divine nature, and is the root of all moral perfections. Wisdom is its form; and is the seat of the divine ideas, the fountain of all truth. The Holy Spirit is the divine effluence, or operative energy proceeding from the divine love, through the forms or truths of divine wisdom. Man, in a finite way, is, therefore, an image and likeness of God, being in his essential nature an organized spiritual form. His inmost principle is his will, or affectional nature. This takes form and receives direction in his understanding, and operates through it to produce results. Man, like God, is thus constituted of a trinity of essentials; namely, will, understanding and a proceeding sphere of influence or operative energy; and yet he is but one person. God may, therefore—we may say *must*, under the laws of human thought—be conceived of as in the human form, since this is constituted of will and understanding, which are

the finite correspondences of Divine Love and Divine Wisdom.

2. The one Divine Being whom we call Jehovah, or God, became incarnate for the work of human redemption. He appeared in the world as a natural man, subject to the conditions of finite existence. In this historical manifestation of himself he is called the Lord Jesus Christ. No new personality was brought into existence by the incarnation; but the one eternal Jehovah is the person who is now named the Lord Jesus Christ. In this one divine person, however, there are successive degrees and forms of life. As in a single human person there are the spiritual, rational, natural and corporeal degrees and forms of life, all acting as one when the lower are properly subordinated to the higher degrees; so in the Lord Jesus Christ there were successive degrees and forms of life, including both the divine and the human. The natural mind and corporeal body were derived from Mary. Having no human father, the higher degrees of mind in him, instead of being finite and human, were infinite and divine, being accommodations of the essential Divinity to the assumed humanity. It is obvious from this that the term Son can, with strict propriety, be applied only to the humanity assumed by Jehovah. It is, however, sometimes used to include the divine truth, since this is the means by which all manifestations of God, including the incarnation, are made. It will also be seen that when we speak of our Lord Jesus Christ, we include in his one personality, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this case, the Father signifies the Divine Love; the Son, the assumed humanity, or the Divine Truth, which is manifested in and through the humanity; and the Holy Spirit, the Divine Effluence proceeding from the assumed and now glorified

and Divine Human. The Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, is the only God of heaven and earth—the Creator and Redeemer of men, and the proper Object of religious worship.

3. The design of the incarnation was the redemption of the human race. The necessity for this work arose from the fact that men, by the process of the fall, had become immersed in naturalism and sensuality, and incapacitated for receiving the influx of divine truth by interior ways. The spiritual degree of the mind was closed; and it became necessary, in order that men might be instructed and regenerated, to manifest divine good and truth to them externally, in such forms as should be most suitable and effective. The Divine-celestial and Divine-spiritual forms in which the Divine Truth was given to the men of the Adamic and Noetic churches, and in which it is received in the celestial and spiritual heavens, was above the reach of their sensual minds. Hence Jehovah clothed himself in our natural humanity, and by the glorification of that humanity, making it divine to its ultimates, presents his truth in divine-natural forms adapted to the percipient and recipient states of natural men. By the reception and practice of divine truth as presented in the forms and teachings of Jehovah's natural life on earth, men may become regenerated, and from being merely natural, become spiritual or celestial. But the work of redemption included more than this. It consisted also in the temptations, combats and victories of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he made his advent, the world of spirits, inspired by the hells, was crowding not only upon the heavens, but also upon men on earth. Many were obsessed by evil spirits, and deprived of reason and moral freedom. They were demoniacs, and incapable of being regenerated. There was danger, too,

that the infernals would multiply such conquests, and thus throw society into utter anarchy, and destroy mankind from the face of the earth.

To avert this result, Jehovah entered himself as a natural man into human society, and became a living factor in human history on the earthly plane. He assumed a finite human organism, infected with all the hereditary evil tendencies of the race, and therefore capable of being directly assaulted by the whole power of the hells and of wicked men. In the sphere of this natural humanity he met all the temptations of evil and falsity from earth and hell. He combated and vanquished them by the power of his divine truth brought down to the natural degree. This process of temptation, combat and victory, was what caused the agonies of Jesus in the garden and on the cross. It was the means, too, by which a judgment was executed in the world of spirits, and by which also the hells were turned back from their encroachments, and reduced to order and subjection. Demoniacal possessions thenceforth became less and less feasible and frequent. By means of this process of temptation and victory, moreover, all hereditary evil was expelled from the humanity of the Lord, and it was made divine. By the work of redemption, therefore, men were relieved of the oppressive domination of the hells, and restored to a state of moral freedom. They were rendered capable of freely choosing between good and evil, truth and falsity, heaven and hell. The way was thus prepared for their regeneration.

4. This view of the process of redemption and atonement, not only shows us how "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" but also enables us to see how men are now "justified freely by his grace through the redemption

which is in (or by) Christ Jesus," and regenerated unto a new and holy life. The grace and truth by which we are enabled to become just and right in the sight of God, reach us through the mediumship of the humanity which He assumed, and as the result of the redemption which He accomplished by means of that humanity. They come to us as his free gift, not as something purchased from Him by the expiatory or substitutional sufferings of a second divine person.

In the process of justification, therefore, there is no transfer of another's merits to us, or imputation of our guilt to a suffering substitute; but simply an acknowledgment and cordial, trustful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as our God and Saviour. We recognize Him as the source of all good, and truth, and life; and gratefully own our absolute and momentary dependence on Him for all the good and truth there is in us, and all the good we are enabled to do. Wherever this acknowledgment exists, and is evidenced by sincere obedience to the divine commandments, there the work of justification takes place, and Christ is realized as a Saviour from sin. One is made just and right in the sight of God, and that, not on the ground of his own antecedent merits, or of any forensic proceeding, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit in him, and his free concurrence in the Spirit's work. Justification is but another name for this rightening of the soul, or its re-creation in the image and likeness of God.

Stripped of all forensic and physical analogies, which, in relation to this subject, are misleading and false, if taken in their literal force, the process of the soul's salvation from sin, may be conceived of as included wholly either in the work of justification, regeneration, or sanctification; and any

attempt to divide the process into well-defined successive stages, designated by these theological terms, must originate either in a misconception of the nature of the process, or in an erroneous idea of the true force of these terms. The terms justification, regeneration and sanctification serve merely to indicate different aspects of one and the same work, or the same work viewed in different relations. Viewed in its relation to the divine law, the work of salvation is called justification; viewed in its relation to the development of a new life in the soul, it is called regeneration; and viewed in its relation to one's spiritual state, it is called sanctification. But perfect justification implies perfect regeneration and sanctification; perfect regeneration implies perfect justification and sanctification; and perfect sanctification implies perfect justification and regeneration. Either work involves both of the others. And whether the process of salvation be regarded as a work of justification, regeneration, or sanctification, it is effected, in all cases, in precisely one and the same way, namely, by the cordial and trustful acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as the source of all spiritual good, and by a life of sincere obedience to His commandments.

5. The New Church propounds also a new interpretation of the Scripture teaching concerning the resurrection. Man is regarded as a spiritual being, beginning existence in, and temporarily clothed with a material body, but capable of living on as a real man, in perfect human form, after the material body is laid aside. As a spiritual being, he is not a simple, unorganized substance, but a perfectly organized man, with spiritual members, organs, and functions corresponding in most respects with those of his natural body; and as there are different kinds of material substance which

enter into man's natural body, so there are different kinds of spiritual substance, which enter into his spiritual organism, and nourish and strengthen its several parts. Man's natural body, moreover, takes its human shape and beautiful symmetry from the indwelling soul; and loses it when the soul, or real man departs. Man's resurrection is his withdrawal from the material body, which takes place immediately after death. What we, judging from natural sight, call death, the angels, judging from spiritual sight, call resurrection. The real man, properly speaking, does not die at all; but lives right on. The natural body dies, and is laid aside never again to be resumed; but the spirit, which is the real man, is raised up at once into a new life—generally on the third day after apparent death. The resurrection of the natural body is never spoken of in the Scriptures, but only the resurrection of the "dead;" that is, of persons who have died, or passed out of this natural life. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living." (Luke xx. 37–8.) These patriarchs had died and experienced the resurrection, and were then, in the Saviour's day, living persons; and this is instanced by Him to show that the dead *are* raised—raised up when the body is laid down; not that their material bodies will be raised some thousands of years hence.

Paul also teaches the same doctrine, showing that, as the germ infolded in the body of a seed, throws off its covering and is developed into a plant or stalk bearing fruit, so the soul, at death, throws off the natural body, rises a spiritual and glorious body, and enters upon a spiritual and immortal life. For "there is a natural body, and there is a

spiritual body," and the natural body, having served its purpose as a means by which the spirit could gain the development requisite to fit it for entering into self-conscious, personal existence in the spiritual world, can be laid aside, never more to be resumed, without impairing the powers and functions of the real man; just as the chrysalid in which the butterfly is formed, having served its use, is cast away never to be re-occupied by its liberated and beautified possessor. Sad, indeed, would it be to think that the bright and happy immortals who now exult in the enlargement and joy of a spiritual state of existence, must, at some future day, re-enter a material organism, and become again subject to the disabilities of a physical existence, and the limitations of time and space.

6. The world into which men are ushered at death is a spiritual and not a material world. Having no longer any physical senses, they are incapable of discerning material objects and earthly scenes; just as now, before our spiritual senses are opened, we are unable to discern the objects and scenery of the spiritual world. That world, moreover, being spiritual, and not subject to the conditions of time and space, cannot be conceived of as locally distant from the earth where we now dwell. No journey through space is required in order to reach it. As to our spiritual nature we are in it already, not consciously, it is true, but really; and could our spiritual senses be opened, as were those of the Hebrew prophets, John the revelator, and Swedenborg, we should see at once that we are now in that world, and in society with spiritual beings. That world, too, is no cloud-land, or ethereal realm, where the inhabitants float in the air eternally, but a real, substantial world—more so, indeed, than this world; for spirit is substance.

There is material substance, and there is spiritual substance, each possessing its distinctive properties. The earth is composed of the former, and the spiritual world, of the latter. Our natural bodies are composed of material substance: our spiritual bodies, of spiritual substance. Spirit is more real and substantial than matter, in like manner as causes are more real and substantial than effects; and things sustaining, than things sustained. To the perceptions of angels the spiritual world, spiritual objects and spiritual beings are as discernible and tangible as material things are to our natural senses. Hence the angels, or glorified spirits of men, (for all the angels and all devils were once men on this or some other earth), walk on solid ground, though it is spiritual; and see, stretching away in the seeming distance, landscapes of surpassing beauty; and dwell in mansions which excel in magnificence all that the natural mind has ever imagined. The spiritual world embraces the three heavens, the three corresponding hells, and Hades, or the world of spirits, which is intermediate between the heavens and the hells. The three heavens correspond to the three degrees of the human mind; and the three hells are the inversion and perversion of these degrees. In the highest or celestial heaven, love is supreme; in the second or spiritual heaven, truth leading to good is paramount; and in the first or natural heaven, law leading to obedience and peace, prevails. Hades is the first receptacle of souls after death. It is here that the judgment takes place, and that men are prepared for admission to some heavenly society, or stripped of all disguises, and discovered to be fit only for the society of devils. It is not a probationary state, where real inward character can be changed, but a world where the inward character formed here, can be developed and brought clearly

to view. This is the process of judgment; and when it is completed upon any individual, he voluntarily betakes himself, if evil, to his own hell; and, if good, he is conducted by angels to his congenial heaven. Each finds his place in a heavenly or infernal society perfectly suited to his own character, or interior quality of life. The evil suffer punishments, not from God, but from their infernal associates, whenever they infringe on the rights of others; but the most deplorable feature of their lot in hell, is the degradation of being which they experience as the result of sin. Yet the Divine Mercy is ever over them, and is continually in the effort to mitigate their miseries and restrain their evils. But their regeneration is impossible. They undergo an external reformation as the result of the punishments inflicted upon them; and are withheld by fear from outward evil acts, just as certain animals may be controlled by fear of the lash, while their real nature remains unchanged. But conscience being utterly extinct in lost souls, they can never be led to genuine repentance. They remain forever self-degraded and imbruted in their dark and foul abodes.

7. The doctrine of the divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Sacred Scriptures, also occupies a very important place in the theological system of the New Church. Some of the books of the received canon, are, however, accredited with a higher degree of inspiration and authority than others. These are the books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, the Psalms, all the prophets, the four Gospels, and the Apocalypse. The remainder are regarded with great respect as sacred writings, valuable for the historical facts which they record, and also for their religious and ethical teachings; but not inspired in the highest sense, nor in all points infallible. The former are pre-eminently

the Word of God, dictated by Him through angels to men, and written in language strictly correspondential. Thus the letter of the Word is the natural form which divine truth takes when brought down to the apprehension of the natural mind. It contains, moreover, an internal or spiritual sense, which is involved in the literal sense as the cause is involved in its effect, or the soul in the body. This sense cannot be apprehended by the natural mind; but is only discerned by the spiritual mind. As there are different degrees of perceptive power and knowing capacity in the human mind, which are opened successively in those who are being regenerated and intellectually developed, so the divine ideas, in their descent from God through the heavens, take on successively lower and adapted forms of expression. Thus for every degree of knowing capacity, there is a corresponding degree of the knowable.

There is, therefore, in the written Word of God, form within form; sense within sense; truth within truth; and each lower is the exact correspondence of some higher truth. Practically, we speak only of the internal sense and the literal sense. The angels are in the former; men are mainly in the latter. The internal sense was but very partially opened to the first Christian Church, the true key to it having been lost. But it is now being opened, the key to it having been restored through Emanuel Swedenborg. This sense is rational and harmonious throughout. It enables us, also, to reconcile the apparent discrepancies of the literal sense.

There are, however, portions of the Word which were never intended to be understood literally at all, but only as symbolical or allegorical forms of divine truth. The first eleven chapters of Genesis and nearly the whole of the Apocalypse

are of this character. Their truth and intended meaning lie almost wholly in the internal sense. A large part of the prophetical writings is of the same character. Much of the Word of God has, therefore, remained till recently sealed and unintelligible to men. This is especially true of the Apocalypse. And yet so open and rational is the literal sense in many parts of the Word, that they who follow it are regenerated and saved. In other words, the spiritual sense often appears upon the very surface of the letter, so that he who will may read and understand it. But no coherent and rational system of doctrine has ever been constructed by those who recognize only the literal sense of the Scriptures. The letter of the Word yields rational doctrine only when interpreted in the light of the spiritual sense. The spiritual sense, though unattainable by man's unaided reason, yet illuminates it, and is seen to be in harmony with it. It challenges the strictest scrutiny of reason, and satisfies all its demands. The New Church, therefore, asks no assent to mysteries, but only to rational truths. There are, it is true, mysteries in God and in nature; but they are not for us. They are not matters of faith. They are simply matters of which we are ignorant; and knowing nothing about them, we believe nothing about them. We have rational evidence that God is; hence we believe this fact. But the mode of his existence is a mystery; and we believe nothing about it. We have sufficient evidence that the blade of grass grows; but how it grows we know not; hence we affirm nothing and believe nothing concerning it. The mode of its growth is to us, not a matter of faith, but of ignorance. So of our whole scheme of doctrine. It is made up, not of mysteries, but of rational spiritual truths. It rests on rational evidence, at the same time that it bears the impress of divine authority.

And the most satisfying and indubitable proof of its divine authority, is its perfect rationality.

8. Closely allied to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and the existence of the internal sense, is that of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his first coming he manifested divine truth in its natural forms in the facts of his earthly life and in the words he spake. "The Word was made of flesh;" that is, it took on the forms of an ordinary human life, the better to adapt itself to the states of gross and sensual men. It cannot be necessary for the Lord to come again in this manner. He is not so poor in expedients that He needs to repeat himself. His second coming must be, not to the natural, but to the spiritual perceptions of men. It must be a revelation of his spiritual, not of his natural body; and of divine truth in its spiritual, not in its natural forms. His second coming must be effected, therefore, by the opening of the rational and spiritual perceptions of men to discern the spiritual sense of the Word, or the inward nature and spiritual glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The literal sense of the Word is compared to "clouds" which obscure the light of the sun; and as the light of the sun breaks through the clouds, or they disperse and vanish away, allowing the full splendor of the sun to shine upon us; so the effulgent spiritual sense of the Word is now breaking through the clouds of the literal sense, and enlightening the minds of men. Hence it is written, "Thy strength, O Lord, is in the clouds." "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." In these and similar passages "clouds" are the symbols of the literal sense of the

Word of God. The Lord comes in the clouds of heaven, therefore, when the light of the internal sense breaks forth from the literal sense. This is the second coming of the Lord; and it is now going on. It has been in progress for more than a hundred years. It was this that effected the last judgment in the world of spirits in 1757; and inaugurated the grandest religious movement ever witnessed upon earth. This movement, of which Methodism has been the initial stage, but which in its full unfolding is to be recognized as a New Dispensation of divine truth, is destined to sweep on, till all nations shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. The divine purpose, "Behold I make all things new," is every year realizing a glorious fulfillment. A new state of the human mind in reference to religion; a state characterized by freedom, rationality, spirituality, and advancing charity and intelligence—all of which are essentials of the genuine New Church—everywhere prevails, and is revolutionizing the theology and ecclesiastical institutions of the world.

9. Finally, the New Church inculcates the paramount importance of a life of charity. Love to God and love to man, evidenced by obedience to the divine commandments and devotion to the practical uses of life, are cardinal principles of the true Christian religion, and take precedence of all dogmatic teachings. Charity which finds expression in the relief of the poor, the sick and the suffering, is not to be neglected; but the life of genuine charity comprehends more than this; it consists also in the faithful performance of our several uses as artisans, tradesmen, professional men, public officers, husbands and wives, parents and children, friends and neighbors. He who performs well some use by which he earns an honest livelihood, thereby benefits society;

and, provided he acts from a religious motive, undergoes a gradual process of regeneration. Swedenborg says:

"Charity extends itself much more widely than to the poor and indigent; it also consists in doing what is right in every work, and our duty in every office. If a judge does justice for the sake of justice, he exercises charity; if he punishes the guilty and absolves the innocent, he exercises charity, for thus he consults the welfare of his fellow-citizens and of his country. The priest who teaches truth, and leads to good, for the sake of truth and good, exercises charity. But he who does such things for the sake of self and the world, does not exercise charity, because he does not love his neighbor, but himself." (*The Heavenly Doctrines*, n. 10.)

In presenting this summary of the doctrines of the New Church, I have said nothing of the beautiful and profound system of philosophy which underlies them all, and which discovers to us more clearly their perfect rationality. My present limits do not allow me to give even a digest of this system; and I must content myself by referring those who desire to acquaint themselves with it, to Swedenborg himself, especially to his treatise on the "Divine Love and Wisdom." I am aware, too, that many things which I have said will appear obscure and, perhaps, irrational in consequence of the brevity which I have been compelled to study. The New Church reader will readily understand, moreover, that, on every point of doctrine which I have presented, I have been under the necessity of suppressing a multitude of thoughts which crowded upon me for utterance, and of selecting only a few where all seemed equally important. The meager statements which I have given, however, may serve as finger-points to the wonderful theological and

philosophical system to which I invite the attention of all thoughtful minds.

From the doctrinal statement I have given, it will readily appear that a new ecclesiastical organization may properly enough be established upon it; and that such an organization may, without any offensive or exclusive assumptions, be styled a New Church. It should be borne in mind, however, that all existing religious bodies, in so far as they are recipients and organs of genuine spiritual life from the Lord, are of the New Dispensation, and imbued with its genius and spirit. They are all being made new; and are destined, we believe, not to be consummated and destroyed, but to be filled and transformed more and more with the life and light of the New Jerusalem.

### SWEDENBORG'S RELATION TO THE NEW CHURCH.

Here the inquiry will naturally arise, What relation does Emanuel Swedenborg sustain to the New Church? In reply it should be observed at the outset, that he did not pretend to found or authorize a new ecclesiastical organization. We have no evidence that he expected or wished that any new religious body would or should be established on the basis of the doctrines he propounded. Speaking of the state of the church hereafter, he says:

"It will be similar, indeed, in the outward form, but dissimilar in the inward. To outward appearance divided churches will exist as heretofore; their doctrines will be taught as heretofore; and the same religions as now will exist among the Gentiles. But henceforth the man of the church will be in a more free state of thinking on matters of faith, that is, on spiritual things which relate to heaven,

because spiritual liberty has been restored to him." (*Last Judgment*, n. 73.)

The New Church which he proclaimed, therefore, was not external and ecclesiastical, but internal and spiritual. He doubtless believed that the theology of existing churches would undergo great modifications as the result of this "free state of thinking;" but he seems to have had no thought of becoming the leader of a sect. And very many who now receive his views, would willingly remain in or attach themselves to some one of the old religious bodies, were they allowed to do so, and subjected to no disabilities for their peculiar beliefs. Swedenborg's sentiments were catholic and generous. He hoped that all the churches might be filled with a purer life, receive more rational and spiritual views of divine truth, and cultivate a broader and more practical charity. For this end he believed that he was raised up; and for this end he labored. He did not profess, however, to give us a new Bible to supersede the old one. He aimed to make the old one more intelligible, by unfolding its long hidden treasures of wisdom; and giving us the key to the true interpretation of those portions of it which had hitherto baffled the skill of biblical students. He sought to give to the world a rational statement of the doctrines of Christianity, and to furnish a satisfactory solution of those vital questions relating to God, the soul and the future life, which, for a century past, have so deeply agitated the minds of men. His writings, therefore, are a new revelation, or unfolding of divine truth—truth already contained in the Sacred Scriptures, but undiscerned by men. He has also disclosed to us many important laws and facts relating to the economy of the spiritual world; and we accept these disclosures, not merely on his authority, but mainly on the ground of their

conformity to the teachings of Scripture, the verdict of reason, the testimony of experience, and the known laws of man's spiritual being.

The question now properly arises, Why should it be thought strange that God should raise up and qualify Swedenborg as the herald of a New Dispensation of divine truth? Is it because of anything exceptionable in his previous character? If so, might not a careful scrutiny into the early life of Paul, David, and the Hebrew prophets, bring to light facts which would invalidate their claims as messengers of God? But Swedenborg does not claim to have been called to this high office on account of any personal merit in himself. It was necessary that some one should be chosen, and the divine choice fell upon him. We have, however, the amplest evidence of his fitness for this great mission. His moral and intellectual powers were of the highest order; and his attainments in science, philosophy, and general learning were unsurpassed by any mind of the 18th century. Surely it will not be alleged that these qualifications were any disadvantage to him in the work of giving to the world a rational system of religious truth. No such qualifications existed in the ancient prophets; nor were they needed. Their mission was to receive divine truth as dictated to them by the Lord through the ministry of angels, and reduce it to writing. Often they were but amanuenses, or unconscious agents in this work. It was not given to them to enter rationally into the communications they received. But Swedenborg was required to unfold the interior significance of these divine communications, and place them in rational light. His work was thus more difficult than that of the prophets. It was necessary, therefore, not only that he should be divinely called, and spiritually regenerated and

illumined; but also intellectually educated, instructed and developed in a pre-eminent degree.

It is objected, however, that his visions of the spiritual world are incredible, and throw suspicion upon his whole system. This objection can scarcely be insisted on by any one who receives the Bible as a divine revelation; for this contains narrations of the same character. Elisha and his servant were in open vision of the spiritual world, when they saw "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire." Paul was in the same state when he beheld the wonders of the "third heaven," and heard things which it was not possible for him to utter. John had experience of open spiritual vision when the wonderful scenes described in the Apocalypse passed before him. And all men, as spiritual beings, possess spiritual senses, which, if opened in this world, enable them to discern objects and scenes in the spiritual world, at the same time that, with their natural senses, they discern natural objects and the scenery of the natural world. There is nothing particularly remarkable, therefore, in the assumption of Swedenborg, that he was, during the last twenty-seven years of his life, while in the exercise of his holy office, endowed with open spiritual vision. The claim will not seem extravagant to one who understands that the spirit within us is the real man, possessed of every essential human organ and function. Especially will it not seem unreasonable, when we consider that the end for which this endowment was granted was, that he might be thereby fitted for the fulfillment of his mission.

But it is assumed by some that the canon of Revelation was completed with the Apocalypse; and that no divinely authorized and plenarily inspired communications of truth have since been made, and that none can be made. Admit-

ting that this opinion, which, as generally held, rests on the false interpretation of a single text of Scripture, is true, it does not invalidate the claim of Swedenborg, or lessen the value of anything he has written. It may never be necessary, probably never will be, for the Lord to add another volume to the present Word, which ends with the Apocalypse. The Word of God is distinguished from all other writings by this circumstance: that it contains within the meaning of the letter, an internal sense which proceeds by orderly gradations up to what is absolutely divine. Swedenborg's writings do not profess to be written in this style. It is not pretended that they possess an internal sense. They simply claim to record the rational perceptions of divine truth which the Lord enabled him to gain while reading the Word, and to narrate the scenes which he witnessed in the spiritual world. And the value which his writings possess above those of other great and good men in modern times, consists in the fact of his divine call as the herald of a New Dispensation, and his superior illumination and preparation as a teacher of divine truth.

It is also worthy of observation, that the state of religious thought about the middle of the last century, was such as to render the advent of a divinely authorized expounder of Christian doctrine, desirable. For fifteen hundred years men had been endeavoring to construct a coherent and rational system of Christian doctrine, but in vain. What one generation of creed builders elaborated with great care, and pronounced the very essence of divine truth, the next generation would demolish or remodel, and in turn declare its work perfect. The garments of Jesus were thus divided. The literal teachings of the Word were arrayed against

each other; while the seamless vesture of the Son of Man, the harmonious and coherent spiritual sense of the Word, was unrecognized. Christianity was losing its power, and, among cultivated minds, falling into contempt, through the multiplication of absurd and contradictory dogmas. The Bible was assailed on all sides by its enemies, as false in its history and pernicious in its moral tendency. Its friends, too, confessed themselves unable to offer a rational solution of its many enigmas and apparent incongruities. Owing, too, to the quickening of scientific thought and the progress of biblical criticism, these incongruities were becoming more conspicuous and insuperable every year. Dr. Burnett in his Sacred Theory of the Earth remarks (I quote from Barrett's Lectures, page 66):

"But some divine person may appear before the second coming of our Saviour, as these (Elias and John the Baptist) before his first coming; and by giving a new light and life to the Christian doctrine, may dissipate the mists of error, and abolish all those little controversies amongst good men, and the divisions and animosities that spring from them; enlarging their spirits by greater discoveries, and uniting them all in the bonds of love and charity."

Mr. Benson, in his Hulsean Lectures, says:

"Darkness is upon the face of the prophetic creation, and the spirit of God must move, ere it can be broken and dispersed; and we must either wait for some inspired interpreter to unravel its intricacy, or sit down in contented expectation for that period of blessedness, in which the difficulties of Christianity shall be swallowed up in the glory of the Second Coming of the Lord, as the seeming inconsistencies of the Jewish scheme, were illuminated by the brightness of his first."

Mr. Pearson, in his Prophetical Character of the Apocalypse, remarks:

"From considering the peculiar character of these prophecies, we may derive reasonable ground for believing that God would vouchsafe some future revelation of his will, in which the indistinct parts of them would be more completely cleared up."

Mr. Myers, in his "Conciones Basilicæ," says:

"What we desire is a Newtonian theory of prophecy, which shall explain them all. And why should we not look forward to some theological Newton, who may be permitted to throw the light of chastened reason on the firmament of prophecy, and be hailed as a divinely sent teacher of the church in the mysteries of the future? Surely, one chief means of disciplining the mind, and preparing the way for such an expounder of holy things, is a strong conviction that, on the whole, previous expounders have failed."

Thus have some of the leading minds of the Christian church unconsciously borne witness to the reasonableness of the claim which we make for Swedenborg. It needs but a careful study of his writings to satisfy one that he meets, in the amplest manner, the requirements of these writers. He has given "a new light and life"—the light of reason and the life of truth—to Christian doctrine. If not an "inspired interpreter," in the fullest sense, he is a divinely illumined interpreter, who has thrown a flood of light upon the realm of prophecy, especially upon the Apocalypse, and brought order out of apparently inextricable confusion in numerous passages of the Word of God.

What Newton did for science, Swedenborg has done for theology: he has announced and demonstrated the most important laws of the spiritual universe, and those principles

of biblical interpretation, which enable the student of theology to deduce consistent and rational doctrines from the letter of the Divine Word; just as the student of nature deduces sound conclusions from natural phenomena by the application of true principles of science.

Before leaving this part of my subject, it is proper that I should give Swedenborg's own statement concerning his call to this sacred office. In 1771, a year before his death, in answer to a letter from the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, he writes:

"The Lord our Saviour had foretold that he would come again into the world, and that he would establish there a New Church. He has given this prediction in the Apocalypse (21st and 22d chaps.), and also in several places in the Evangelists. But as He cannot come again into the world in person, it was necessary that He should do it by means of a man, who should not only receive the doctrine of this New Church in his understanding, but also publish it by printing: and as the Lord had prepared me for this office from my infancy, He has manifested himself in person before me, his servant, and sent me to fill it. This took place in the year 1743. He afterwards opened the sight of my spirit, and thus introduced me into the spiritual world, and granted me to see the heavens and many of their wonders, and also the hells, and to speak with angels and spirits, and this continually for twenty-seven years. I declare in all truth that such is the fact. This favor of the Lord in regard to me, has only taken place for the sake of the New Church which I have mentioned above, the doctrine of which is contained in my writings."

This statement may be dismissed with a shrug and a sneer; but the candor, sincerity, and intelligence of him who makes

it, remain to confront the skeptic. Swedenborg was too honest a man to attempt to deceive us; too intelligent and wise to be easily deceived; and too calm, dignified, and consistent in all his writings, to be charged with insanity.

### RELATIONS OF METHODISM TO THE NEW CHURCH.

We are prepared now to consider intelligently the relations of Methodism to the New Church. And, first, it will be observed that these two systems synchronize in their origin. While the processes preliminary to the last general judgment were taking place in the spiritual world, and the Lord was preparing a spiritual basis for the New Church which He was about to establish on earth, there appeared in this world, as the result of these movements, the new and remarkable development of religious activity called Methodism. While Swedenborg was undergoing, during the first half of the 18th century, a work of discipline, instruction and spiritual regeneration, designed to fit him as the Lord's instrument for conveying to men the doctrines of the New Dispensation, Whitfield and the Wesleys were qualifying themselves for the Christian ministry, and initiating more earnest and successful methods of evangelizing effort. While Methodism was assuming organic form in the classes and societies raised up by John Wesley, and gaining its first wonderful triumphs under the field preaching of its great apostles, Swedenborg was gradually coming into the clear and open spiritual vision requisite to fit him for the high office to which the Lord had called him; and events of the most momentous character were hastening to a crisis in the spiritual world. In 1757 the judgment process was completed. The imaginary heavens were dispersed; and the

new heavens were organized and prepared for the transmission of the light and life of the New Age to men.

Following closely upon this consummation was an exhibition of unprecedented power in the great Methodist reformation. "The year 1760 was signalized by a more extraordinary religious interest than had hitherto prevailed among the Methodist societies. Here began, says Wesley, 'that glorious work of sanctification which had been nearly at a stand for twenty years.' . . . . It continued to advance for several years. In 1762 he remarks that his brother had some years before said to him that the day of the Methodist Pentecost had not fully come; but he doubted not it would, and that then they should hear of persons sanctified as frequently as they had thus far heard of them justified. 'It was now fully come,' adds Wesley. His journal for successive years records the spread of this higher Christian experience, and its salutary effects on all the interests of his societies."—*Stevens' History of Methodism.* Vol. I., page 402.

Thus the events which took place in the spiritual world in connection with the formation of the New Church, find their counterpart in the successive stages of the Methodist movement; and are revealed in them, as causes are revealed in their effects.

The characteristics of Methodism, moreover, are such as would naturally attend the first developments of the New Dispensation. The paramount object of this Dispensation is to establish the true doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ by identifying him as the supreme and only God. And although Methodism has failed to grasp the whole truth on this subject, yet it has magnified the name of Jesus, as no party in the church had ever done before, and thus prepared the way for the full recognition of his supreme and

absolute Divinity. In the spiritual consciousness of Methodism, the Lord Jesus Christ has occupied a higher place, and shone with a more resplendent light, than in any previous state of the Church. Practically, therefore, in numerous instances, his divine-human form has fully absorbed the attention of the worshipper, and caused him to forget, for the time at least, the other persons of his supposititious trinity. It was scarcely to be expected that the doctrine of the underived and sole divinity of Jesus would at once supplant the traditional dogma of three divine persons. Though the true doctrine upon this subject was, at the very outset, propounded in the writings of the New Church, yet its development in the consciousness of Christendom, has necessarily been gradual. There is but a step, however, between the Christ of Methodism and the Christ of the New Jerusalem; and yet this step is one of vast theoretical and practical significance.

The office of Methodism as introductory to the New Church, is further seen in its doctrine of a free salvation available to all. It is thus identified unmistakably with the new age of Christian progress. It harmonizes with it also in the stress which it lays on good works both as necessary to be observed in the search after God, and also as the condition of continued acceptance with Him. It has taught, moreover, quite as clearly as the specific New Church itself, that "a deed or work, in itself considered, is nothing but an effect which derives its soul and life from the will and thought; and that such as are the will and thought which produce a deed or work, such also is the deed or work." It has, however, betrayed its character as a transitional movement by holding in connection with this doctrine, ethical and theological principles utterly in-

congruous with it; as when it teaches the doctrine of justification by faith only, and speaks of our best services as needing to be covered and supplemented by the merits of Christ in order to be made acceptable to God.

In like manner, the active and marvelous spiritual experiences of Methodism, in the awakening, conversion, regeneration and illumination of souls, are such as ought to be looked for in the opening stages of New Church life. The influx of mightier spiritual forces into the minds of men, would not at once revolutionize the terminology and formulas of religious experience. The first effect would naturally be rather to intensify the style of Christian experience already prevalent. The communities in the Spiritual world through which this influx must descend, and by which it must be modified, would be at first composed largely of minds that had been educated and fashioned under the old forms of Christian thought. Hence the early experiences of Methodism would not be separated by any wide chasm from the better forms of experience already known in the church. They would differ mainly in intensity at first, and only change as new and more rational views of divine truth should come to prevail.

Among the fruits of this intensified form of Christian experience, may be noted the aggressive evangelical agencies that sprang into existence toward the close of the eighteenth, and during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. None will question the indebtedness of the world to the philanthropic spirit of Methodism, as diffused abroad in all the churches, for these schemes of Christian propagandism. It is equally evident that they are such as the inauguration of a new, broad, and rational view of Christianity would summon into existence. But it has also been the aim of

Methodism to exalt spiritual above ecclesiastical Christianity. It has reasserted with great emphasis the declaration of Jesus, "The kingdom of God is within you." It has denied the divine authority of any particular forms of church order; and holds all, its own included, subject to the rule of expediency. Whatever churchly forms may seem to promise the best results, are held to be lawful. Christianity is spiritual life; and all the externals of the Lord's kingdom, must be made subservient to the development of this life in the hearts of men. In this particular, too, Methodism presents a very important phase of the New Church.

But as I have already intimated, Methodism combines with many rare excellencies, some glaring errors; some of the worst falsities of the traditional theology and some of the worst evils of a sensuous style of piety, with many of the best elements of New Church doctrine and life. It illustrates the truth of the saying, that the present is ever under a mortgage to the past. Methodism is Christianity in transition from the first Christian, to the New Jerusalem Dispensation. It must needs, therefore, exhibit both imperfectly. It must bring into the New Age, some of the defects of the consummated Age; just as it introduces into the latter some of the elements of the former. But though it is a mediatorial system, it is yet a progressive one. It is liquidating the mortgage which the error-blind past left upon it; and will execute a lighter mortgage upon the future than any previous generation has left upon the estate of humanity.

It will further illustrate the relations of Methodism to the New Church to observe, that the main elements of power in it, have been distinctive New Church elements. The influx which has given it life, has come from the new heavens.

Its most effective ideas are in harmony with the new scheme of doctrine. The infinite love of God to men; Christ as the manifestation of this love; the absolute divinity of Jesus; his benignity toward sinful men; the imperative demand for sincere repentance and trust in Christ as a condition of pardon; the necessity of good works; the doctrine of moral freedom and responsibility; the probationary character of the present life; the divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures; the duty of immediate and entire submission to the will of God; and the doctrine of immortality in weal or woe, according to the character formed here;—these are the ideas with which the ministers of Methodism have gained their victories; and these ideas have been most effective when presented most in harmony with the general scheme of New Church doctrine. The introduction of such discordant ideas as the literal wrath of God, the divine tripersonality, the vicarious atonement, the imputation of Christ's merits to the believing soul, and the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, has but served to confuse the mind of the inquirer, and postpone or vitiate the process of spiritual recovery.

The Methodist Quarterly Review, Jan., 1869, page 159, says:

"Our impression is that less reliance on the constant preaching of hell-fire has, with exceptions, always been one of the differences of Methodism from Calvinism. Dr. Clarke on 2 Cor. v. 11, reprobates the 'constant declamation on hell and perdition.' Rev. Thomas Vasey, of the British Conference, speaking of the conversion at Newcastle of 'some of the worst specimens of humanity,' says: 'Now, with him it was a maxim not to preach hell and damnation to such people, but always take the most encouraging

view of the subjects, such as the love of God, the power of the Holy Ghost, the possibility of getting saved and elevated.' We heard a leading Methodist revivalist, a few years since, remark, 'that a few evenings previous he had put a check upon the flow of penitent feeling by preaching too much of a terror sermon.' In this respect, as in a great many others, we suspect that Methodism has anticipated the age."

When, therefore, I am told that the wonderful success of Methodism in securing the regeneration of men, is an attestation of the truth of its doctrines, I answer, yes: it is a proof of the truth of some of its doctrines. Such results cannot be effected by unmixed error. But so far as many points of Methodist theology are concerned, success has been achieved, not by them, but in spite of them, and by the glorious truths held in connection with them. It is also worthy of remark that the successes of Methodism have been achieved mainly in the work of converting and training souls; and this, by the faithful application of the simpler truths of the Gospel. We rejoice that Methodism has done this work so well. In real importance it overshadows all other work, and challenges the co-operation of angels as well as men.

But there is work of a different kind which also sustains a vital relation to the progress and final triumph of the Lord's kingdom. I refer to the work of furnishing a rational solution of the difficult problems of educated religious thought. These problems have hitherto given comparatively little trouble to the class of minds with which Methodism has had to deal. But a new era of its history is dawning. Its people are taking rank among the most cultivated and enlightened in the community. Its ministers

are becoming eminent for learning as well as piety. Both ministers and people will soon be called to grapple with issues more difficult than those which have hitherto engaged their attention. Men are everywhere questioning traditionary dogmas, and becoming more and more restive under teaching that inculcates the duty of a blind, unreasoning faith. Methodism, like all other forms of organized Christianity, must be prepared to offer a rational exposition of its faith and of the authority and meaning of the Word of God. In the words of Isaac Taylor:

"The past Methodism took to itself the belief which it found; but the coming Methodism must derive its belief anew from Scripture, by bringing to bear upon this difficult subject a reformed principle of biblical interpretation."—*Wesley and Methodism.* Page 289.

In this higher range of religious thought many of the ministers of Methodism are quite at home; and verge closely, on some points, toward the teachings of the New Church. But loyalty to their theological and ecclesiastical system renders it impossible for them to pursue their inquiries and announce their conclusions in perfect freedom.

There seems little hope, therefore, that Methodism will soon be able to enter the field successfully against the adversaries who now assail the bulwarks of revealed religion. By its very organic law, and by a provision which cannot be repealed, its Articles of Religion are made unchangeable. No advantage can hereafter be taken of any "reformed principle of biblical interpretation," unless it shall lead to conclusions in harmony with its present creed. And yet it is quite certain that any scheme of Christian belief, which shall satisfy all the just demands of rational thought, will require a reconstruction of all the traditional creeds of Chris-

tendom. And if the great Methodistic movement is to sweep on until it shall occupy the higher as well as the lower planes of religious thought, and vanquish the present forms of unbelief, as it has immorality, sensuality, and all forms of practical irreligion in the past, it must be liberated from existing restraints, and allow its best minds to enter upon a thorough re-examination of its doctrinal symbols. It must elaborate for itself, or accept from others, a faith that shall satisfy the most enlightened reason, as well as harmonize with a true interpretation of the Word of God. In effecting this work, Methodism will identify itself as a branch of the Lord's New Church. Failing to do this, it will evince its incompetency for its sublime mission, and give place to other agencies more imbued with the spirit of the New Dispensation.

The relations of Methodism to the New Church are also seen in the fact that it has purified the religious feeling of the world, clarified the spiritual perceptions of men, and opened the way for the influx of higher forms of divine truth and the cultivation of advanced states of Christian experience. It was well that Methodism approached the masses with the lower and more sensuous forms of Christian truth. Their feelings were thus aroused and their lives reformed, as they could not have been by more philosophical statements of the same truths. But the inevitable result of this kind of teaching, and, indeed, the only result that could in any case have been secured in the class of minds with which Methodism at first had to deal, was the creation of a highly emotional religion. The preaching, praying, exhorting and singing were calculated to play upon the sensuous nature, and produce a spiritual-natural, rather than a purely spiritual state of experience. This was often extremely vivid and

powerful; and enabled its subjects to maintain a life of piety, and die in holy triumph. It was a great advance upon the previous state of the Church. It supplied the requisite basis, too, for a still better condition of spiritual life. It prepared men to receive divine truth in rational form, and thus to realize a more purely spiritual experience.

But in order that spiritual experience, in its best forms, may be developed, there must be a clearer and more rational presentation of the truths of religion than Methodism has been able to make. Those states of spiritual life which are proper to the New Dispensation, and which are approximated in the riper experiences of Methodism, are not nourished by sensuous truths. They can only be sustained by spiritual truths, shining in rational light. They involve, too, the opening of the spiritual degree of the mind, which can only be effected by the previous regeneration and illumination of the natural and rational degrees. While, therefore, Methodism has lifted the general mind of the church up from the natural to the spiritual-natural sphere of religious life; and, by the partial reception of rational spiritual truths, has made an approximation to the higher states of spiritual experience, it has proved itself inadequate to the further perfecting of its work. It has raised the Lazarus of a dead church, and removed his burial robes; but it lacks the wisdom to instruct him in the varied duties and privileges of his resurrection state. Hence when souls pass from the elementary into the advanced states of regenerate life, they soon discover the incongruity that exists between the theoretical teachings of Methodism, and the deliverances of their own consciousness. They feel the need, and dimly discern the existence, of a spiritual philosophy widely different from that which they have been taught; and much

of their subsequent life is then spent in the vain endeavor to reconcile their experiences with their doctrines.

While, therefore, we hail John Wesley as the Lord's instrument for the reformation of the vicious and degraded, and the restoration of spiritual life to a dead church, and as the John Baptist of the New Dispensation; we welcome Emanuel Swedenborg as the wise and benignant teacher sent of God to instruct the renovated church in the doctrines of a pure and rational Christianity. And if Wesley was necessary to Swedenborg, it is equally true that Swedenborg was necessary to Wesley. Their labors were mutually complementary; and yet, as often happens in the progress of reformatory movements, the pioneer and he who carried on the work to its completion, lived and labored without conscious co-operation, and in comparative ignorance of each other's mission. Wesley's distinctive work is nearly finished: Swedenborg's is but just begun. Wesley's writings are no longer relished as formerly even among Methodists, and are scarcely known in the literary world: Swedenborg's are read more and more widely every year, and by the best thinkers of the age. Wesley has ceased to exercise any appreciable influence on the theology of the world: Swedenborg is a rising power that is everywhere revolutionizing or greatly modifying the creeds of Christendom. Thus the involuntary testimony of Wesley to Swedenborg is "He must increase, but I must decrease." The Methodism of to-day is not the Methodism of thirty years ago. It has undergone a remarkable change. The Methodism of Wesley and the fathers, with its fiery zeal, its rude displays of power, its vivid experiences, its bold simplicity, its rigid rules, its technical piety, has passed away; and a new Methodism, wanting the impress of Wesley's mind, and

shaped more nearly after the pattern of the New Church, has taken its place.

It is eminently fitting, therefore, that there should be kindly relations between the adherents of Methodism and the men of the New Church. Nothing but unreasoning prejudice and needless misconception of each other's providential mission, have thus far prevented fraternal intercourse between them. Both parties have, perhaps, been equally in fault. Wiser counsels must ultimately prevail; and all who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus, must stand shoulder to shoulder in the advancement of his kingdom. If, indeed, we are living under a New Dispensation, all Christian people, and all of every religion who are in a life of genuine charity, are more or less fully in the Lord's New Church, and entitled to its name and fellowship. There are New Churchmen in all the churches; and there are Old Churchmen in all the churches, even in the organized or visible New Church, if men are to be classified according to their genius and state. But our obligation to promote the union of the members of Christ's body, rests upon the further consideration that each is necessary to the other. Methodism needs the "reformed principles of biblical interpretation," the rational doctrines, and the divine philosophy of the New Church; while the New Church needs the Christ consciousness, the living experience, the deep earnestness, and the practical wisdom of Methodism. The combination of these characteristic elements would constitute a power before which no opposition could stand. Thus far there has been perhaps a reasonable excuse for the want of a reformed theology in Methodism, and a partial apology for the want of religious earnestness and activity in the New Church; but it cannot be necessary that each should perpetuate its

defects. With the progress of the New Dispensation there must come a mingling of these kindred streams of influence, symbolized by Methodism and the New Church, that in their union each may supply what the other lacks. In this way only can each fulfil its appointed mission.

As to Methodism, its first and most urgent need is a knowledge of the true doctrine concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christ of Christendom has hitherto been shorn of much of his strength by the erroneous estimates which his professed adherents have put upon him. To some he has been but an ordinary man; to others, a superhuman but still finite being; and to others, but an equal partner in the godhead, or one of three co-equal divine persons. Millions of jubilant souls have sung,

> "All hail the power of Jesus' name!
> Let angels prostrate fall:
> Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown him Lord of all;"

but nowhere except among the professed adherents of the New Church have these stirring words been understood in their proper force. To others who have sung them, the Lordship of Jesus has been subordinate, or joint, and not exclusive. Let Christians understand that Jesus is Jehovah, the Mighty God and Everlasting Father, as well as the Prince of peace, and they will give to this inspiring song such an emphasis and such a fullness of devotional feeling, as have never yet been realized. It will be like the bursting forth of the noon-day sun through dense and darkening clouds. And if dim rays of truth from a misapprehended Christ have so illumined and gladdened the minds of his followers, and ushered in the dawn of the millennial glory,

we may surely hope that the general acknowledgment of his majestic claims as the supreme and only God manifest in human form, will introduce the cloudless splendor of the New Jerusalem.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

It will doubtless be objected to the design of this appeal, that no comparison can be instituted and no relation exist between a body so great and powerful as Methodism, and a body so dissimilar in its form, and so small and feeble as the visible New Church. This objection seems well taken. The ecclesiastical body called the New Church, if judged by the number of its members and the time it has had for growth, is scarcely entitled to be mentioned in connection with Methodism, and is but a humiliating comment on the New Dispensation. I do not wish to be understood as claiming any special relationship between things so obviously different. The intelligent Methodist would, moreover, find just ground of offense in the attempt to make the numerous and influential body of which he is a member a mere appendage or satellite of a religious body which is so small that its existence is actually unknown to thousands of his own people. It would be to him, and to me also, like instituting a comparison between a mountain and a molehill. But the attentive reader must have observed that I make no comparison and claim no special relation between Methodism and the visible organization called the New Church. I have presented Methodism as the first phase of New Church life in the world; the first tidal wave of that mighty movement of humanity, which may properly be called the New Dispensation of divine grace and truth. And the New Church is the totality of this great movement, distinguished from all

those foreign and incongruous elements which appear in Methodism and other popular forms of organized Christianity. The New Church, therefore, in its proper character as an internal and spiritual body, organized by the Lord alone, is found in all religious associations, and is constituted of all who acknowledge the Lord and are in a life of charity. In this character the New Church is simply the Lord's church, and is the sun around which all ecclesiastical bodies must revolve. But in its still more specific character as composed of those who have entered rationally into the Christian faith, and now receive the distinctive doctrines of the New Dispensation more or less fully, the New Church may count its adherents by tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands. There are found in all the churches, and outside of all the churches, those who hold its views concerning the spiritual world, the resurrection, the nature and process of regeneration, the doctrine of atonement, and the sole divinity of Jesus Christ. It is not for me to explain how persons can hold these views and yet maintain relations which would seem to imply the endorsement of creeds in which antagonistic views have always been supposed to be expressed. But that they receive the essential elements of the new theology is certain; and their continuance in their old relations may doubtless be taken as evidence of the growing laxity of orthodox belief, and of a tacit understanding in the churches that a rigid adherence to formal creed statements, shall no longer be insisted on. And no ecclesiastical body can feel itself humiliated by being brought into comparison with this already numerous and rapidly-growing class of minds, unless indeed their superior intelligence and broader, diviner charity may cause its attainments to appear small, and show much of its fancied gold to be but dross.

But even the visible organization, known as the New Church, small as it is, is not a power to be despised. As an agency for publishing the doctrines of the New Dispensation, it is performing a most important use. By means of books, tracts, periodicals, lectures, and sermons it is leavening the mind of Christendom with a purer and more rational faith. The literature and philosophy, as well as the theology of the world, give abundant evidence of its success in revolutionizing the state of the human mind. It stands at the fountain head of theological and educated thought, and is pouring into it the healing waters of the river of life. The *Presbyterian and Index*, published at Columbia, S. C., says, in a recent issue:

"There was a time, not long past, when perhaps it was proper enough to laugh at the pretended revelations of this mystic abomination. But really, Swedenborgianism has come to be a serious evil of no contemptible magnitude. It has left its fogs, and thrust itself upon the view as a substantial foe. It is now a hard-working, faithful, progressive ally of modern infidelity; and is all the mightier because of its loud boasts as a promoter of God's glory. Our readers, many of them, would be equally surprised and alarmed, did they know how widespread *within* our own ecclesiastical bounds is the poisoning atmosphere of this hair-brained philosophy."

We are thankful for such testimony as this from an avowed antagonist. We have evidence, too, that the leaders of religious thought in all the churches, are verging steadily toward the "mystic abomination of Swedenborgianism," and are finding in it that which saves them from infidelity, and binds them more firmly than ever to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the inspired Word of God.

Considered, therefore, in reference to the number of those who fully or partially accept its rational scheme of Christian doctrine, and also in reference to the ecclesiastical organization which assumes its name, the New Church is a factor which cannot be safely ignored in forecasting the probable future of Christianity. Its apparent magnitude is no true measure of its real efficiency. The heart or brain, though constituting but a small fraction of the mass of the human body, is yet ranked as higher in importance than other portions of greater volume and weight. The governing power in society, even in a pure democracy, rests practically in the hands of a few. In like manner the New Church, composed of those who receive more or less fully the doctrines and the life of the New Dispensation, though feeble as yet in numbers and resources, and unworthy in these respects to be compared with Boodhism, Mohammedanism, Romanism, or Methodism, whose adherents are numbered by millions, and whose resources are boundless—constituting, as it does, the medium through which the influx of the new heavens is descending into the general mind of the race—is entitled to pre-eminence above all mere external or ecclesiastical organizations.

The foregoing remarks are also a substantial answer to the objection raised against the New Church on account of the slowness of its growth, as compared with the growth of Methodism. In so far as Methodism is constituted of distinctive New Church ideas, its growth is the growth of the New Church, and the very *kind* of growth which Swedenborg predicted for it. In the same way the New Church has been growing in all the existing churches, and growing in the general community outside of all the churches. That it has not grown more rapidly as an external organi-

zation, is doubtless, to some extent, the fault of its adherents. Their methods may have been injudicious and their aims mistaken. Their temper may have been too cold, and their religion too much a matter of theory. They may have held themselves too much aloof from the earnest practical work of reforming and saving their fellow men. Be this as it may, they have increased but slowly. But what I wish now to note particularly, is, that the distinctive work to be done by New Churchmen, must needs be done *slowly;* while the distinctive work which Methodism proposes to itself, can well be done rapidly. Methodism aims to bring men to a solemn and formal assumption of Christian discipleship; and endeavors then to build them up in a life of experimental and practical piety. The New Church also seeks these ends; but its distinctive mission is to lead men on to a rational understanding of Christian truth, and to develop in them a higher and purer spiritual experience than Methodism, or any form of orthodox Christianity, is able to produce. It builds not for a century merely, it is doing work preparatory to the great church of the future. It is laying firmly the heavy foundation stones of the New Jerusalem; and erecting the massive wall of jasper which shall protect her against the assaults of her foes. Building thus for all time, we must needs build slowly. The New Dispensation which the Lord is now inauguating, is to be the crown and consummation of all the ages, and last forever. It must, therefore, rest on divine truths rationally apprehended. These can never change, or be outgrown or superseded. New truths supplementary to them, will doubtless be added from age to age; but the old foundation stones will never need to be disturbed. But the instruction of men in rational truth and the development of the best forms of spiritual expe-

rience cannot, at this stage of the New Dispensation, be hastened like the work which Methodism has undertaken. Revival methods are here of little avail. Indeed, as commonly practiced, they would be irrelevant and injurious. True religion rests on principles of true spiritual science; and the mastery of these principles is essential in order that the soul may enter into the higher ranges of Christian life.

We are not discouraged, therefore, by the little apparent growth which the New Church has realized, either in its visible or invisible proportions. We know it is growing, and growing as fast as the conditions of human society will allow. The theological changes of the last hundred years have been mainly in the direction of the New Church system of doctrine. Unitarianism and Universalism, whose work has been mainly a destructive one, have accomplished valuable results in exposing the errors and absurdities of the orthodox faith, though they have been unable to provide any positive and rational system of truth in place of the errors they have destroyed. They have demonstrated the illogical and unscriptural character of the common dogmas of the tri-personality of God, the vicarious atonement, the resurrection of the body, the materialism of the future life, the vindictiveness of the Almighty, and the common theory of biblical inspiration and interpretation; and have thus opened the way for more rational views on these subjects. Similar negative results have also been achieved by many able minds within the fold of reputed orthodoxy. Dr. Bushnell, Henry Ward Beecher, and others of less note in this country, together with Robertson, Campbell, Young and other eminent divines in Great Britain, in their divergence from the so-called evangelical faith, have discarded most of the dogmas in which it differs from the theology of Sweden-

borg, and on some points have come into substantial agreement with him. It is notorious also, as the New York *Observer* admits (April 4, 1872), "that Christians of various surnames are sinking the minor differences that divide them, and exalting the one great name, the only name given under heaven among men whereby they can be saved, and making Christ's Church, and Christ's work, and the salvation of souls more important than the building up of a mere denomination."

Rev. Ray Palmer, D. D., in the *American Presbyterian Review*, two or three years since, bore similar testimony. He said "that while few or none of the cardinal truths of the New Testament" (by which he means the cardinal dogmas of orthodoxy), "are positively doubted or denied, few or none, on the other hand, are vigorously grasped and unflinchingly believed." To these doctrines, he says, "but a faint and faltering assent" is given, "as though the thought were secretly allowed, that, after all, there may be some uncertainty about these things."

The *Christian Advocate*, N. Y. (Aug. 19, 1869), said: "Ours is an era of doubt. Nothing is accepted from the past as settled. The very foundation of things is carefully re-examined."

The last General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church virtually decided in the appeal case of Rev. S. D. Simonds, of San Francisco, that one may hold and teach the views of the New Church concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet remain a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Mr. Simonds having been suspended from the ministry for one year by the California Conference, on a bill of charges involving among other things the specification of "holding and disseminating doctrine contrary to the Articles

of Religion," was reinstated by the General Conference, in full view of the fact that he still adhered to the doctrine, for holding and teaching which he had been suspended. This doctrine—the doctrine of Swedenborg concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, which necessarily involves the New Church view of the atonement—Mr. Simonds is still teaching as a Local minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, having, as he says, "gained the right, from the highest body, for myself (himself) and for all Methodists, to hold and teach the grand doctrine of the New Age."

Facts like these are important. They show that the salient points of the orthodox faith are fading away from the minds of Christians, and held to be of little, if any, practical value. And these are the points, too, that have constituted a barrier between New Churchmen and orthodox believers, and stood in the way of New Church progress. I am justified, therefore, in the conclusion, that the theological changes to which I have referred, are leading the Christian world toward the ultimate acceptance of the beautiful and sublime doctrines of the New Dispensation. To every New Churchman the contemplation of this event affords a deep satisfaction. He glories in it, not because it will be the triumph of one sect over all others, or will secure the general recognition of Swedenborg's claims; but because it will signalize the overthrow of all sectarianism, whether in Old or New Churchmen; will unite all hearts in the bonds of fraternal love; and will exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, as the "blessed and only Potentate," "King of kings and Lord of lords."

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